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Message Text

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 01807 201230Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------128014 201752Z /43
R 201113Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASS ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6851
INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1807

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, PFOR, AG, MO, SS
SUBJECT: SELF-DETERMINATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SAHARA

REF: ALGIERS 1751 AND 1752 (BOTH NOTAL), RABAT 3888 (NOTAL),
STATE 147112 (NOTAL)

1. WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY RABAT'S VIEW THAT WE SHOULD NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN A SAHARA MEDIATION EFFORT. (RABAT 3888) THE SECRETARY HAS MADE THIS VIEW CLEAR IN HIS LETTER TO BOUTEFLIKA (STATE 147112), AND I REINFORCED THE POINT IN MY CONVERSATIONS WITH BOUMEDIENE AND BOUTEFLIKA (ALGIERS 1751 AND 1752).

2. AS IS TOO OFTEN CASE, POWER POLITICS ON ALL SIDES IN SAHARA DISPUTE HAVE RIDDEN ROUGHSHOD OVER HUMAN RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH STORIES OF MOROCCAN MURDER, RAPE, PILLAGE, AND NAPALMING MUST BE HEAVILY DISCOUNTED, SOMETHING HAS CAUSED LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TO FLEE TO ALGERIA FROM DISPUTED TERRITORY, AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANTI-MOROCCAN PROPAGANDA
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CAMPAIGN MOUNTED BY POLISARIO IS SOLE CAUSE OF THIS EXODUS. FOR THEIR PART, ALGERIANS CERTAINLY PLAYING POLITICS WITH SAHARA REFUGEES, AND IT MAY VERY WELL BE TRUE THAT POLISARIO AND/OR ALGERIANS ARE PREVENTING SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF SAHAROUIS FROM LEAVING CAMPS.

3. SILL, WHATEVER MERITS OF CASE MAY BE, ALGERIANS,

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HAVE SOME STRONG SELF-DETERMINATION-HUMAN RIGHTS CARDS
IN HAND WHICH THEY MAY BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE PLAYING:

A. MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS HAVE TAKEN OVER A
FORMER COLONY WITHOUT RESORT TO ANY PROCESS OF SELF-
DETERMINATION THAT HAS BEEN ACCEPTABLE TO INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY. SCHEDULING OF OAU SUMMIT IN OCTOBER IS
TESTIMONY TO AFRICAN INABILITY TO IGNORE THIS POINT
IN SPITE OF SOME AFRICAN SYMPATHY FOR MOROCCAN
POSITION.

B. MOROCCAN-MAURITANIAN OCCUPATION
CREATED A REFUGEE PROBLEM OF LARGE ENOUGH
MAGNITUDE TO HAVE TRIGGERED THE CONCERN AND INTER-
VENTION OF THE UNHCR TO AID SAHARAOUI REFUGEES.

C. CURRENT INFUSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS
INTO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY CONVENIENTLY COINCIDES WITH
STANDING ALGERIAN-POLISARIO CALL FOR SELF-DETERMINATION.

4. IN SHORT, GOA HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MAKING IT APPEAR
THAT IS IS MOROCCANS, NOT ALGERIANS, WHO HAVE HUMAN
RIGHTS PROBLEM IN SAHARA. THIS IS OVERSIMPLIFICATION
OF SITUATION, BUT HARD FACT OF REFUGEE CAMPS' EXISTENCE
COMBINED WITH EFFECTIVE ALGERIAN LOBBYING ARE GIVING IT
CURRENCY. IT IS ALGERIAN POLICY THEME WHICH WILL BE
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WITH US FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

5. COMMENT: WHATEVER ONE THINKS OF ALGERIAN HUMAN
RIGHTS ARGUMENTS, THEY CANNOT BE SUMMARILY DISMISSED
AND REQUIRE DEVELOPMENT OF REASONABLE U.S. RESPONSE.
FIRST ELEMENT OF THIS RESPONSE, IT SEEMS TO US, IS TO:
NOTE THAT TWO COUNTRIES WITH WHICH WE ENJOY GOOD RELA-
TIONS ARE CHARGING EACH OTHER WITH HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS; REITERATE THAT OUR NEUTRALITY ON
SUBSTANCE OF PROBLEM PREVENTS US FROM TAKING A STAND
ON PRINCIPLE OF QUESTION; AND CONTINUE URGING
BOTH COUNTRIES TO SETTLE A SITUATION WHICH HAS
DEPRIVED SAHRAOUIS OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS.

6. SECOND ELEMENT IS TO BE ALERT FOR OPPORTUNITIES
TO BE OF ASSISTANCE IN HUMANITARIAN AREA. UNHCR APPEAL
FOR AID TO SAHRAOUI REFUGEES IS CASE IN POINT, AND
OTHER SUCH OPPORTUNITIES MAY ARISE IN FUTURE. RES-
PONSIVENESS IN THIS DOMAIN DOES NOT DEAL WITH PRIN-
CIPLE OF PROBLEM, BUT IS BETTER THAN DOING NOTHING.HAYNES

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